Everyday Conversations:

Learning American English

EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS: LEARNING AMERICAN ENGLISH
ENGLISH LEARNING EDITION

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Introductions and Small Talk

Dialogue 1-1: **Formal Greetings**

JAMES:	**Good morning**, Professor Austin, how are you doing?
PROFESSOR AUSTIN:	Good morning, James. I am doing well. And you?
JAMES:	I'm great, thank you. This is my friend Emma. She is thinking about applying to this college. She has a few questions. Would you mind telling us about the process, please?
PROFESSOR AUSTIN:	Hello, Emma! It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm more than happy to speak with you. Please stop by my office next week.
EMMA:	It's a pleasure to meet you, professor. Thank you so much for helping us.
PROFESSOR AUSTIN:	**Don't mention it.** Hopefully, I will be able to answer your questions!



LANGUAGE NOTES

- The greetings ***good morning****/good afternoon/good evening* are used at different times of the day to greet people. "Good evening" is often used after 6 p.m. or generally when the sun has set.
- "Good night" is not a greeting: It is used when leaving a place or group of people. *Thank you and good night!/Good night, and see you tomorrow.*
- When people meet in the United States, it is customary for them to shake hands. A handshake should be firm and usually lasts for about two to three seconds — which allows enough time to say "Nice to meet you."
- **"Don't mention it"** is another way of saying "You're welcome." The phrase "You are welcome" is more formal. However, responses such as *Don't mention it./No problem./ Happy to help.* are informal ways of responding to a thank you.

Dialogue 1-2: **Informal Greetings and Farewells**



JANE: **Hi**, Helen! **How's it going?**

HELEN: **Fine, thanks — and you?**

JANE: Just fine. **Where are you off to?**

HELEN: **To the library.** I've got a history exam next week and need to start studying. Ugh.

JANE: **Oh, no.** Well, I'll see you later then. Good luck!

HELEN: Thanks. **See you later.**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **"Hi"** is an informal way of saying "hello." Notice that the "i" sound in "hi" is extended, to show that Jane is very pleased to see Helen.
- **"How's it going?"** is an informal way of saying "How are you?"
- **"Fine, thanks—and you?"** Notice the rising intonation on "and you?" This shows that Helen is interested in what Jane has to say.
- **"Where are you off to?"** is an informal way of saying "Where are you going?" Notice the falling intonation since this is an information question, not a "yes/no" question.
- **"To the library."** Notice that Helen does not say "I'm going" here because that information was already established in the question "Where are you off to?"
- **"Oh, no"** is a way of saying "I sympathize with you" or "I understand you are not happy."
- **"See you later"** is an informal way of saying "goodbye."

Dialogue 1-3: **Formal Introductions**

MARGARET:	**Mr. Wilson, I'd like you** to meet Dr. Edward Smith.
MR. WILSON:	It's nice to meet you, Dr. Smith.
DR. SMITH:	Pleasure to meet you, too.
MARGARET:	**Dr. Smith is an economist. He just finished writing** a book on international trade.
MR. WILSON:	Oh? That's my field, too. I work for the United Nations.
DR. SMITH:	In the **Development Program, by any chance?**
MR. WILSON:	Yes. How did you guess?
DR. SMITH:	I've read your articles on technical assistance. They're excellent.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Mr. Wilson, I'd like you ...** Notice the rising intonation on "Mr. Wilson," which is used to address someone. Listen for the "d" in "I'd like." This means I would like, which is very different from I like. ("I'd like" means the same as "I would like" or "I want.")
- **Dr. Smith is an economist.** Notice the stress on "economist." This content word has new information, so it is emphasized. There are four syllables in "economist," with the stress on the second syllable (e-CON-o-mist).
- **He just finished writing ...** "just" means the very recent past. "Just" is usually used with a simple past verb because the action is complete. However, it can also be used with the present perfect (He's just finished writing ...).
- **Development program.** Since these two words make a compound noun, the main stress falls on "development."
- **By any chance?** Means the same as "possibly." Notice the rising intonation, which is used in yes/no questions to confirm that something is true.

Dialogue 1-4: **Informal Introductions**

JIM:	**Who's** the tall woman next to Barbara?
CHARLES:	That's her friend Mary. **Didn't you meet her** at Steve's party?
JIM:	No, **I wasn't at Steve's party.**
CHARLES:	Oh! Then let me introduce you to her now. **Mary, this is my friend Jim.**
MARY:	Hi, Jim. **Nice to meet you.**
JIM:	You, too. Would you like a drink?
MARY:	**Sure,** let's go get one.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **"Who's"** is the contracted form of who is. It is pronounced the same way as "whose" (/ huwz/), but the meaning is different.
- **Didn't you meet her ...?** Notice that this is a negative question. Charles thought that Jim had met Mary before. He is now surprised that Jim does not know Mary, and so he uses a negative question to show his surprise.
- **I wasn't at Steve's party.** Notice that the emphasis here is on "at" although prepositions normally have weak stress. In this case, "at" means "there" (I wasn't there).
- **Mary, this is my friend Jim.** This is a friendly way to introduce two people. It's common to follow this with "Jim, this is Mary." In this case, Mary says "Hi, Jim" first.
- **Nice to meet you.** This is a typical response after you've been introduced to someone.
- "**Sure"** is often used in informal conversation to mean "yes."

Dialogue 1.5: **What Time Is It?**



NATASHA: What time is it? We're going to be late!

TONY: **It's a quarter after seven.** We're on time. Don't panic.

NATASHA: But I thought we had to be at the restaurant by **7:30** for the surprise party. We'll never make it there with all this evening traffic.

TONY: Sure we will. **Rush hour** is almost over. Anyway, the party starts at 8:00. But I do need help with directions. Can you call the restaurant and ask them where we park our car?

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **It's a quarter after seven.** This phrase is one of the most common ways of stating this time. It means: "It's 15 minutes past 7:00." Another possibility here is to simply say: "It's seven fifteen." In general you can say: "It's a quarter past the hour." How do we know the time of day? Look for context clues: "evening traffic."
- In the dialog, Natasha and Tony are going to a surprise party. They need to be on time. Therefore there is an element of stress and urgency. When someone is stressed for time you can use expressions like: *Don't worry. / Don't stress. / We're fine. / We will be on time.*
- Natasha thinks the surprise party begins at **7:30.** There are two different ways to express this time. You may say simply "seven thirty" or "half past seven."
- **Rush hour** is the time of day—usually in the morning and evening—when traffic is heavy because of people commuting to and from their workplace by bus, by car, by subway, on foot, etc.

Dialogue 1-6: **A Telephone Call**

JOHN: **Hi, Alice, it's John.** How are you?

ALICE: **Oh, hi, John!** I was just thinking about you.

JOHN: That's nice. **I was wondering if you'd like to** go to a movie tonight.

ALICE: **Sure, I'd love to!** What's playing?

JOHN: **I was thinking about** that new comedy *Lights Out.* **What do you think?**

ALICE: **Sounds great!**

JOHN: OK, **I'll pick you up** around 7:30. The movie starts at 8:00.

ALICE: See you then. Bye!



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Hi, Alice, it's John:** Hi, ____, it's ____ is a casual and friendly way to say hello on the phone. Although "it's" means "it is," it is used to mean "I am" here.
- **Oh, hi, John**! Notice the rising intonation here. Alice is excited to hear from John and is very pleased that he called her.
- **I was wondering if you'd like to ...** This is a polite and indirect way of asking "Do you want to ...?" John is nervous and does not want to appear too direct or bold. Notice how the question goes up at the end, which shows that he is not overly confident.
- **Sure! I'd love to** means "Yes, I would love to." Notice that Alice is very enthusiastic and friendly. She wants John to feel comfortable about asking her out on a date.
- **I was thinking about ... / What do you think?** Again, John does not want to appear too bold. He wants to give Alice a chance to suggest a movie.
- **Sounds great!** Is an informal way of saying "That is a good plan."
- **I'll pick you up** is an informal way of saying "I'll come to your house so that we can go together."

Dialogue 1-7: **Can You Say That Again?**



LUKE: Hello? Hi, Stephanie, how are things at the office?

STEPHANIE: Hi, Luke! How are you? Can you please stop and pick up extra paper for the computer printer?

LUKE: What did you say? Can you repeat that, please? Did you say to pick up ink for the printer? Sorry, the phone is **cutting out.**

STEPHANIE: Can you hear me now? No, I need more computer paper. Listen, I'll text you exactly what I need. Thanks, Luke. **Talk to you later.**

LUKE: Thanks, Stephanie. Sorry, my phone has really bad **reception** here.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- There are a few ways to express a lack of understanding and to request additional information. The most common ones are stated, but you can also say "Excuse me" or simply "I can't hear you." In a more formal situation, try saying "I'm sorry?" or "I beg your pardon?" (with a rising intonation).
- When asking someone to clarify information try saying *Can you please repeat that? / Can you spell that for me? / Can you please write down the address for me?*
- **Cutting out** describes a difficulty in understanding a caller due to poor cellphone reception. If you are having trouble understanding the caller, you can also say *The line is breaking up / I am losing you.* If the phone call is disconnected because of poor reception, you can say *The call dropped.*
- **Talk to you later** is the equivalent in a phone conversation of "See you later" in a regular, face-to-face conversation.
- **Reception** here means the availability of cellular service, the possibility to receive and give calls on a cellphone. Cellphone reception can be limited in remote areas, inside large buildings or underground (in the subway, for instance).

Dialogue 1-8: **Coincidences**

MEG: **Well, hello there,** Julia! **Long time no see!**

JULIA: Meg! Hi! **What a** coincidence! I haven't seen you in ages! What are you doing here?

MEG: I just got a new job in the city, so I'm shopping for some clothes. Hey, what do you think of this shirt?

JULIA: Hmmm … well, you know how much I love blue. See? I've got the same shirt!

MEG: You **always did have good taste! What a small world.**



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Well, hello there ...** Notice the emphasis on “hello,” which shows that Meg did not expect to see Julia.
- **Long time, no see!** This is a common expression used to say hello to someone you haven’t seen in a long time.
- **What a ___!** This exclamation shows a great degree of surprise, joy, disappointment, etc. (What a surprise to see you here! What a joy to have you with us! What a shame that you have to leave so soon! What a wonderful idea that is!)
- You **always did have good taste!** Notice the stress on “did,” which Meg uses to emphasize the fact that Julia DOES have good taste! Meg says it in a joking way because Julia likes the same thing that she does.
- **What a small world** is a common expression used to describe a chance meeting or other such coincidence.

Dialogue 1-9: **Weather Report**



JENNIFER: It's freezing outside! What happened to the weather report? I thought this **cold front** was **supposed to** pass.

GABRIELA: **Yeah,** I thought so too. **That's what I read online this morning.**

JENNIFER: I guess the **wind chill** is really **driving down** the temperature.

GABRIELA: Can we go inside? I feel like my toes are starting to go numb.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- A **"cold front"** means a large mass of cold air. It can be plural: There were multiple cold fronts this January.
- Here **"supposed to"** refers to something that is intended or expected to happen: I thought it was supposed to rain today. This phrase can be used for many situations: I thought the train was supposed to arrive at 9:00 a.m. sharp.
- ***Yeah*** */ Yup / Uh huh* are informal conversational cues used by native speakers in conversation. Each of these responses could be used here for "yes." Gabriela affirms what Jennifer is saying. The most polite way to affirm a response is to say "yes."
- Listen for the emphasis on **"That's what I read online this morning."** This useful phrase can be used with other verbs to convey information: *That's what I heard on the radio. / That's what I saw on TV. / That's what I read online.*
- ***Chill*** */ freezing / cold: These words describe cold weather. I feel the wind chill. / I feel the chill. / I am freezing. / I am cold.*
- **Wind chill** is the effect of the wind making the temperature feel colder on a person's skin. This is an uncountable noun. The temperature is 4 degrees, but with the wind chill it feels like -8. These phrases are used in weather reports as well.
- The phrase **"driving down"** means "forcing to be lower" and can be used in many situations. *An oversupply of new houses is driving down sales prices in the area.*

2

Around Town

Dialogue 2-1: **Ordering a Meal**

WAITER:	Hello, I'll be your waiter today. **Can I start you off with something to drink?**
RALPH:	Yes. I'll have iced tea, please.
ANNA:	**And I'll have lemonade.**
WAITER:	OK. **Are you ready to order, or do you need a few minutes?**
RALPH:	I think we're ready. **I'll have the tomato soup to start, and the roast beef with mashed potatoes and peas.**
WAITER:	How do you want the beef — rare, medium, or well done?
RALPH:	**Well done, please.**
ANNA:	And **I'll just have the fish**, with potatoes and a salad.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Can I start you off with something to drink?** Notice how the question starts with "Can." Since this is a yes/no question, the intonation rises at the end.
- **And I'll have lemonade**. Notice how Anna stresses "I'll" and "lemonade" to emphasize her choice.
- **Are you ready to order, or do you need a few minutes?** The word "or" signals a choice here. Notice the rising intonation on order, and the falling intonation on minutes (the first choice is "Are you ready to order?" and the second choice is "Do you need a few minutes?").
- **I'll have the tomato soup to start, and the roast beef with mashed potatoes and peas.** Notice that "tomato soup," "roast beef," "mashed potatoes" and "peas" are stressed because the food order is the important information here. Notice also that "tomato soup," "roast beef" and "mashed potatoes" are compound words. The stress falls on the second word in each phrase.
- **Well done, please.** Notice that the subject and verb are omitted in the response; only the necessary information is given.
- **I'll just have the fish.** Anna says "just" here to mean that she does not want a starter.

Dialogue 2-2: **At the Doctor's Office**



DOCTOR: **What seems to be the problem?**

CATHY: **Well,** I have **a bad cough** and **a sore throat.** I also have **a headache.**

DOCTOR: How long have you had these symptoms?

CATHY: **About** three days now. And I'm really tired, too.

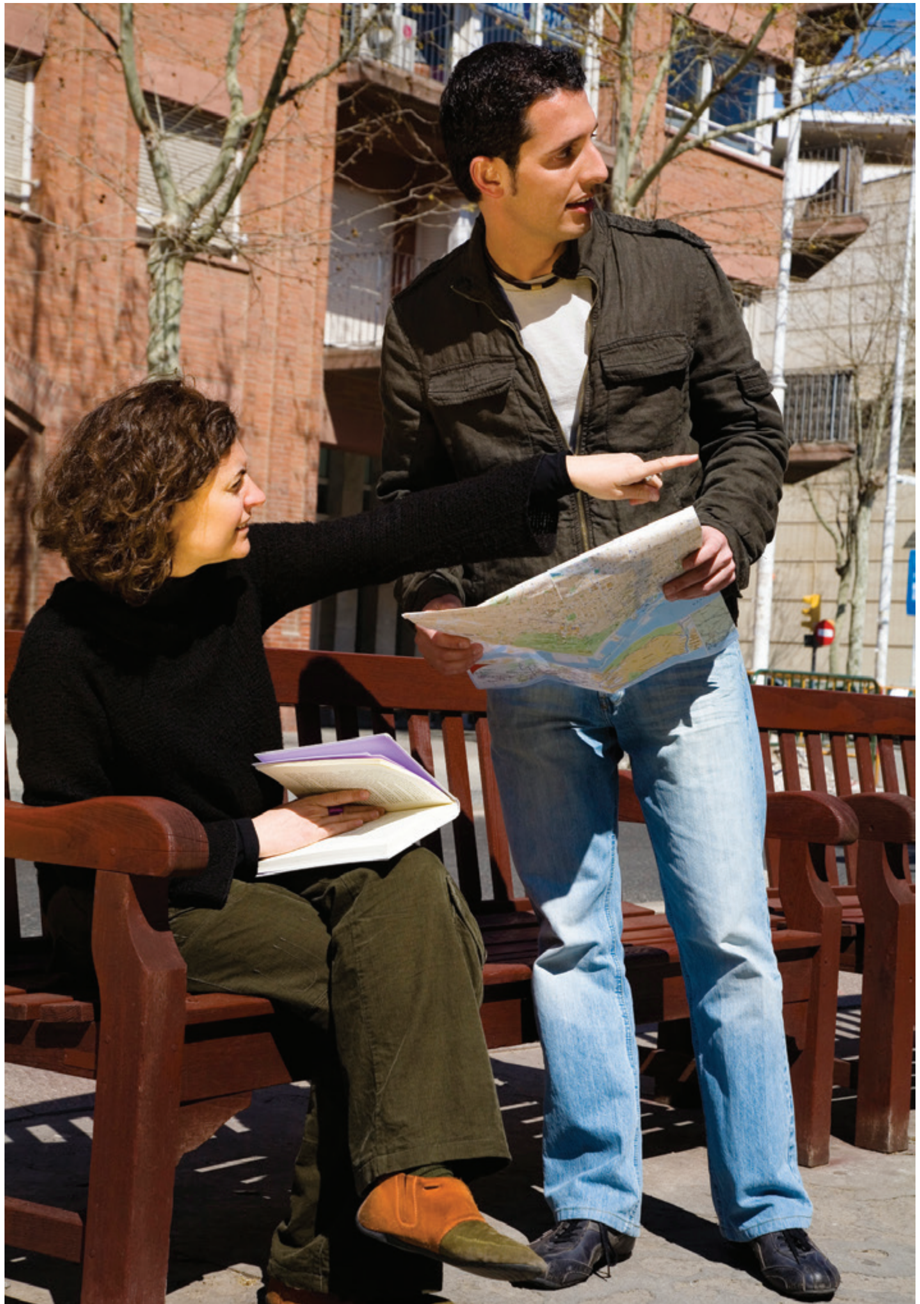
DOCTOR: Hmm. It sounds like you've got the flu. **Take aspirin** every four hours and **get** plenty of **rest. Make sure** you drink lots of fluids. **Call me** if you're **still sick** next week.

CATHY: OK, thanks.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **What seems to be the problem?** means "What is the problem?" Notice that the intonation falls at the end of the question. The doctor wants information, not a "yes/no" answer.
- **Well** is used as an introductory word. Notice how the vowel is drawn out, to sound like "Weeeeeell ..." This can be used as a way to "buy time" while you think about what you want to say next.
- **A bad cough ... a sore throat ... a headache:** Notice the article "a" before each symptom.
- **About** is used to mean "more or less." It's used here to give an estimate of time.
- **Take aspirin ... get rest ... Make sure ... Call me:** Notice the doctor uses the simple tense here to give instructions. This is the imperative form of the verb.
- **Still sick** means "continue to be sick."

Dialogue 2-3: **Asking Directions**



MARK: Excuse me. **Could you tell me where the library is?**

NANCY: **Yes, it's that way.** You go three blocks to Washington Street, then turn right. It's on the corner, across from the bank.

MARK: Thanks! I've only been in town a few days, so I really don't know my way around yet.

NANCY: Oh, **I know how you feel.** We moved here a year ago, and **I still don't know where everything is!**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Could you tell me** ... is slightly more polite than "Can you tell me ...?"
- **Could you tell me where the library is?** Notice that "library" is stressed here because it is the word with the important information. This is an indirect question, so the subject (the library) comes before the verb (is). The word order is reversed in a direct question (Where is the library?).
- **Yes, it's that way**. Notice the stress on "that." The speaker is pointing in a certain direction and wants to emphasize that direction.
- **I know how you feel** is a way of saying "I understand." Notice the emphasis on "feel." The speaker wants to show empathy and understanding.
- **I still don't know where everything is!** Notice the word order of where "everything is." The subject (everything) comes before the verb (is). This word order is different from the direct question (Where is everything?).

Dialogue 2-4: **Calling for Help**

PETER:	**Hey! That car just ran a red light and hit that truck!**
GAIL:	**Is anyone hurt?**
PETER:	I don't know … let's call **911**. … Hello? **I'd like to report a car accident near the post office on Charles Street.** It looks like a man is hurt. Yes, **it just happened.** OK, thanks. Bye.
GAIL:	**What did they say?**
PETER:	They're going to send an ambulance and a police car right away.
GAIL:	Good, they're here. I hope the man is OK.
PETER:	I know. You have to be so careful when you're driving.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Hey!** This expression is used to show surprise. Notice how **That car just ran a red light and hit that truck!** is said with a lot of energy.
- **Is anyone hurt?** This is a yes/no question, so the intonation rises at the end. Notice how this question is asked in a worried way.
- **911** is the phone number you dial for emergency services. The person who answers will ask you questions about the emergency situation and then send out the necessary emergency services, which may include police officers, firefighters and an ambulance.
- **I'd like to report a car accident near the post office on Charles Street**. Notice how the key words "car accident," "post office" and "Charles Street" are stressed. These are the important details that the emergency services need.
- **It just happened** is a way of saying "It happened a moment ago." Notice the stress on "just," which emphasizes that the accident happened very, very recently.
- **What did they say?** Notice how "say" is emphasized, but the intonation falls at the end of the word. This is a "what" question, so the intonation falls at the end.

Dialogue 2-5: **At the Supermarket**



LOUISE: Hey, Julia … Look at those desserts! **How about** baking some cookies today?

JULIA: **Hmm …** Yeah, **that's a great idea!** While we're here, let's pick up the ingredients.

JULIA: OK, what do we need?

LOUISE: **The recipe calls for flour, sugar and butter.** Oh, and we also need eggs and chocolate chips.

JULIA: **Why don't you** get the dairy ingredients? You'll find those in the refrigerated section in the back of the store. I'll get the dry ingredients — they're in **aisle** 10.

LOUISE: Great! Let's meet at the checkout.

JULIA: OK. See you there.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **How about** is a casual way to suggest doing an activity. Notice that "how about" is followed by an "-ing" verb.
- **Hmm …** Notice that Julia pauses for a moment. "Hmm" is an expression used to think about something first before speaking.
- **That's a great idea!** Notice the emphasis on "great." Julia has thought about it and then decided that she really does want to bake cookies.
- **The recipe calls for** is a way of saying "the recipe says we need." The phrase "call for" can also be used to talk about the weather forecast. (They're calling for rain.)
- **… flour, sugar and butter.** Notice that this is a list, so there are short pauses between each item. Notice also that each ingredient is stressed because this information is important.
- **Why don't you …** This expression is used to ask someone to do something. It can also be used to give advice — but in this case two friends are deciding on who does which task.
- **Aisle** Notice the silent "s" in aisle. An aisle is an orderly lane in a supermarket, with shelved products on both sides. Each aisle has a number, so that it is easy to find what you need.

Dialogue 2-6: **Running Errands**

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST:	**Hi, there.** How can I help you?
CLAIRE:	Well, I'm in town visiting for a few days, and I need to get some things done while I'm here.
HOTEL RECEPTIONIST:	**Sure.** What do you need?
CLAIRE:	I need to **get my hair cut.** I also need to **have my new pants hemmed.**
HOTEL RECEPTIONIST:	OK. Here's a map of the city. There's a good hair salon here, which is just a block away. And there's a tailor right here. **Is there anything else?**
CLAIRE:	Yes. I'll need to **have my car serviced before my long drive home!**
HOTEL RECEPTIONIST:	**No problem.** There's a good mechanic a few blocks away.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Hi, there.** Notice the intonation in this greeting. It rises after "Hi" and falls after "there."
- **Sure** is a friendly expression to mean "OK."
- **Get my hair cut / have my new pants hemmed / have my car serviced.** Notice get/ have + object + participle. This structure is used to describe actions that someone else does for us. "Get" and "have" are interchangeable here.
- **Is there anything else?** here means "Do you need more information?"
- **Before my long drive home!** Notice the emphasis and intonation on "home." The speaker wants to show humor here. If she doesn't get her car checked, she might not get home! She wants to be friendly and light with the receptionist.
- **No problem** here means "Don't worry." Notice the stress on "No." The receptionist laughs first, then puts emphasis on "No" by lengthening the word. This shows that she understands the car could break down if it doesn't get serviced.

Dialogue 2-7: **At the Post Office**

POSTAL CLERK:	**What can I do for you today?**
CAROL:	I need to mail this package to New York, please.
POSTAL CLERK:	OK, let's see how much it weighs … it's about five pounds. If you send it express, it will get there tomorrow. **Or you can send it priority** and it will get there by Saturday.
CAROL:	Saturday is fine. How much will that be?
POSTAL CLERK:	**$11.35** [eleven thirty-five]. Do you need anything else?
CAROL:	**Oh, yeah!** I almost forgot. I need a book of stamps, too.
POSTAL CLERK:	OK, **your total comes to $20.35** [twenty dollars and thirty-five cents].



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **What can I do for you today?** Notice that this question starts with "What," so the intonation drops at the end of the question.
- **Or you can send it priority ...** Notice the stress on "or," which emphasizes that there is another possibility.
- **$11.35 ... $20.35** Notice the two different ways the postal clerk says the price. First he says eleven thirty-five (without the words dollars and cents), then he says twenty dollars and thirty-five cents.
- **Oh, yeah!** is an expression used here to mean "I just remembered something." It's often followed by "I almost forgot."
- **Your total comes to ...** is a way of saying "the cost is ...."

Dialogue 2-8: **Catching Up After Class**



LINDA: **Hey! How did your physics exam go?**

FRANK: Not bad, thanks. **I'm just glad** it's over! **How about you … how'd your presentation** go?

LINDA: Oh, it went really well. Thanks for helping me with it!

FRANK: No problem. So … **do you feel like** studying tomorrow for our math exam?

LINDA: Yeah, sure! **Come over** around 10:00, after breakfast.

FRANK: All right. I'll bring my **notes.**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Hey!** is a friendly expression meaning "hello."
- **How did your physics exam go?** is a way of saying "How was your physics exam?"
- **I'm just glad …** Notice the stress on "glad." "Just" is used for emphasis before an adjective here.
- **How about you …** Notice the intonation falls here because the speaker is going to follow it up with a detailed question.
- **How'd your presentation …** Notice the contraction for "How did" sounds like /howdj/ and "your" sounds like /yer/.
- **Do you feel like** here has the meaning of "do you want to." Notice "do you feel like" is followed by an "-ing" verb (studying).
- **Come over** here has the meaning of "come to my house."
- **Notes** Students take notes about what the teacher says during a lecture.

Dialogue 2-9: **Shopping**

SALESPERSON:	**Can I help you?**
GLORIA:	Yes, **I'm looking for a** sweater — in a **size medium.**
SALESPERSON:	**Let's see** … here's a nice white one. What do you think?
GLORIA:	I think **I'd rather have it in** blue.
SALESPERSON:	OK … here's blue, in a medium. **Would you like to try it on?**
GLORIA:	OK … yes, I love it. It fits perfectly. **How much is it?**
SALESPERSON:	It's $50. It will be $53, with tax.
GLORIA:	Perfect! **I'll take it.**



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Can I help you?** or "May I help you?" is what a salesperson normally says to greet a customer.
- **I'm looking for a** here means "I don't know exactly which one I want."
- **Size medium.** Clothing usually comes in small, medium and large sizes. Some women's clothing comes in number sizes, usually ranging from 2 to 16.
- **Let's see ...** An expression used when a person wants to think something over, to make a choice or decision, or to look for something.
- **I'd rather have it in** here means "I don't like this exact one. I would prefer it in a different" color/size/material, etc.
- **Would you like to ...?** is a polite way to ask "Do you want to ...?"
- **Try it on** means to test the fit or appearance of a garment by putting it on. "Try on" is a separable phrasal verb, so the object "it" goes between "try" and "on."
- **How much is it?** means "How much does it cost?" Notice that the main sentence stress falls on "is" in this question.
- **I'll take it** means "I will buy it."

Dialogue 2-10: **Transportation**



JOYCE: **Should we take a taxi or a bus** to the mall?

BILL: **Let's** take a bus. It's impossible to get a taxi during **rush hour.**

JOYCE: **Isn't that** a **bus stop** over there?

BILL: Yes ... **Oh!** There's a bus now. We'll have to run to catch it.

JOYCE: **Oh, no! We just missed it**.

BILL: **No problem.** There'll be another one in 10 minutes.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Should we ... or ...?** Is a way of asking "Which is better?" "Should" is used to ask for an opinion. Note that we do not say "Will" here.
- **Take a taxi or a bus?** The word "or" signals a choice here. Notice the rising intonation on taxi (the first choice) and falling intonation on bus (the second choice).
- **Let's** (Let us) means "I think we should do this."
- **Rush hour** is the time of day when most people are going to or from work. In most American cities, rush hour is from about 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. and from about 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Notice that "rush hour" is a compound noun, with the main stress on the first word.
- **Isn't that** This is a negative question. The speaker expects an affirmative answer. It is used to check information.
- **Bus stop** is a compound noun, with the main stress on the first word.
- **Oh!** is an exclamation used to express alarm or surprise.
- **Oh, no!** is an expression used to express disappointment.
- **We just missed it** here means "We arrived a moment too late to get the bus." Notice the emphasis on "just" to show the very recent past.
- **No problem** here means "It doesn't matter."

3

Pastimes and Activities

Dialogue 3-1: **How Old Are You?**

PATTY: **I'm really excited** for Aunt Mary's surprise **birthday party** this afternoon! **Aren't you?**

SUSAN: Yeah! How old is she?

PATTY: **She'll be 55** on May 14 **[fourteenth]**.

SUSAN: Wow! I didn't know that my mom was older — **she's going to be** 57 on September 2 [second]. Anyway, Aunt Mary's going to be so surprised to see us all here!

PATTY: I know! But we still have to get all the food set up before she gets here … OK! We're all ready now. Shh! She's here!

ALL: Surprise!



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **I'm really excited ...** Notice the emphasis on "really." "Really" is used to emphasize the adjective "excited" here.
- **Birthday party** Notice that the normal stress for a compound noun falls on the first element of the compound.
- **Aren't you?** This negative tag is used to show that the speaker expects a positive answer. Patty assumes that Susan is also looking forward to the party.
- **She'll be 55** Notice that "55" is stressed here. This detail answers the question "How old is she?"
- **Fourteenth** Notice that we use "th" for ordinal numbers, starting with 4 [but first, second and third]. The stress is on the second syllable [fourTEENTH]. Compare this with "fortieth: 40th" [FORtieth].
- **She's going to be ...**. Notice how this is pronounced like "gonna be." Instead of four syllables "go/ing/to/be" there are three syllables "ga/na/be."

Dialogue 3-2: **At the Movies**



BOB: We'd like two tickets for **the 3:30 show,** please.

TICKET SALES: Here you go. **Enjoy the movie!**

[Inside the theater]

BOB: **Would you mind moving over one,** so my friend and I can sit together?

WOMAN: **No, not at all.**

BOB: Thanks a lot!

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **The 3:30 show** Movies are shown at different times throughout the day. This refers to the movie that starts at 3:30. Notice the emphasis on 3:30.
- **Enjoy the movie!** Notice how the intonation rises on movie. This is said in a friendly way, and is followed by an exclamation point.
- **Would you mind** is a polite way to ask "Can you do something for me?" Notice the verb ends in "-ing." Compare this structure to "Would you mind if I" plus a verb that ends in "-ed" (Would you mind if I opened the window?).
- **Moving over one** Here "one" is short for "one seat."
- **No, not at all** is a way of saying "No, I don't mind" or "I will be glad to." Notice the answer to "Would you mind" is in the negative form.

Dialogue 3-3: **What Are You Good At?**

SANDRA: **So …** what should we do?

JULIE: Well, I like to do arts and crafts, and **I'm really good at** drawing. **What do you** think?

SANDRA: **Hmm … how about** playing a board game? That would be more fun.

JULIE: OK. **Let's** play Scrabble! I'm really good at spelling, too!

SANDRA: **Oh, yeah? We'll see about that!**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **So …** Notice how the "o" sound is drawn out here, combined with the intonation, which shows boredom.
- **I'm really good at** "Really" means "very" and is used to emphasize "good." It goes before the adjective.
- **What do you** Notice the pronunciation here — it sounds like "Whaddaya."
- **Hmm …** is used to show that the speaker is thinking. It is also used to show that the speaker disagrees with an idea.
- **How about** is used to make a tentative suggestion. The speaker is introducing an idea and doesn't want to sound too strong.
- **Let's** is used to make a strong suggestion. The speaker feels confident about the plan.
- **Oh, yeah? We'll see about that!** "Oh, yeah?" is used in a joking way to show a bit of friendly competition. Notice the emphasis on "that," which refers back to "good at spelling."



Dialogue 3-4: **What's Your Favorite Sport?**



PHIL: **What time is that soccer game on?** I thought it started at noon.

JACK: We must have had the wrong time. Oh, well … soccer's not my favorite sport anyway. **I much prefer basketball.**

PHIL: **Oh, really?** I thought your favorite sport was tennis! **I'm a big fan of basketball,** too.

JACK: **How about a game** sometime?

PHIL: **Sure thing!** Why don't we go **shoot some hoops** now since the soccer game isn't on?

JACK: Excellent idea. Let's go.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **What time is that soccer game on?** means "When does the soccer game start?" "What time" plus something plus "on" is a common expression used to ask about the start time of a TV show or a movie.
- **I much prefer basketball** here means "I like basketball a lot more than soccer." Notice how "much" is stressed to show that the speaker really likes basketball.
- **Oh, really?** Notice the rising intonation on "really." This shows that the speaker is surprised. He thought that Jack liked tennis the best.
- **I'm a big fan of basketball** is a way of saying "I like basketball very much" ("to be a fan of" is a casual expression used to describe something you really like).
- **How about a game** here means "Let's play a basketball game."
- **Sure thing!** This is a casual expression used to mean "OK."
- **Shoot some hoops** means to play an informal game of basketball. This is a casual expression used between friends.

Dialogue 3-5: **A Night at the Theater**

SHANNON: What a fantastic performance! Thank you for inviting me to the musical.

ELENA: **You are welcome.** I'm happy you enjoyed the show. The choreography of the dancers was incredible. It reminds me of when I used to dance.

SHANNON: I know! Y**ou were such a talented ballerina.** Do you miss dancing?

ELENA: Oh, **that's very kind of you,** Shannon. I do miss it sometimes. But I will always be a fan of the arts. That's why I love going to musicals because it's the perfect combination of song, dance and theater.

SHANNON: Absolutely! I'm glad you are still an art fan too. Thank you for the invitation. It's always a pleasure to attend an arts event with you and learn something new.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **You are welcome.** Elena replies "You are welcome" in this dialogue. She could also say, "Don't mention it," which is an example of downgrading. Downgrading a compliment varies with culture. When in doubt, just say "You are welcome."
- When getting a compliment to someone (for example: **"You were such a talented ballerina"**), you can either accept the compliment (**"That's very kind of you"**) or downplay the compliment ("Oh, I wasn't that good").
- Giving compliments in English often includes using superlatives ("the most ...," "the best ..."). This is the best musical playing on Broadway! / What's the most entertaining movie you've seen? However, compliments can also be given by using the construction "I'm a fan of ...": *I'm a fan of the arts. / I'm a big fan of theater. / I'm a huge fan of this band.* Notice the use of adjectives.

Dialogue 3-6: **Taking a Vacation**



JULIE: I just bought a **ticket** to New York City. I'm so excited to see the city!

SOPHIE: Good for you! Traveling is so much fun. I love discovering new places and new people. When are you leaving?

JULIE: Next week. I'm taking the **red eye.** It was cheaper. Hopefully, I'll be able to sleep on the plane.

SOPHIE: I wish I could go with you! New York City is a magical place. You will have so much fun.

JULIE: I hope so. I'm going to visit my brother who lives there. I will stay for a week and then take the train down to Washington, D.C.

SOPHIE: That sounds like a great vacation. I'm looking forward to a week at the beach for my summer vacation. I just want to relax.

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Ticket** can refer to many different types of transportation (metro, bus, train, plane, etc.). In general, you can guess the means of transportation by the context.
- When discussing airplane travel, a **red eye** is a flight that leaves at night to arrive early the next morning. This is in reference to how red your eyes become when you don't get a full night's sleep.

Dialogue 3-7: **At the Pet Store**

CONNIE: **Oh! What a beautiful cat.** What do you think?

GARY: I think I'd rather get a dog. **Dogs are more loyal than cats.**

CONNIE: Yes, but they're so much work! Would you be willing to walk it **every single day?** And clean up after it?

GARY: Hmm. **Good point.** What about a bird? Or a fish?

CONNIE: We'd have to invest a lot of money in a cage or a fish tank. And I don't really know how to **take care of** a bird or a fish!

GARY: Well, we're obviously not ready to get a pet yet.

CONNIE: **Yeah, you're right.** Let's go grab some coffee and talk about it.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Oh! What a beautiful cat** "Oh!" is used to show surprise or excitement. "What a ..." is an expression that means "I think this is a very ..." "What a(n) ..." is followed by an adjective, which is usually emphasized. Notice the emphasis on "beautiful" here.
- **Dogs are more loyal than cats.** Two things are being compared here (dogs and cats). Notice the structure of the sentences: (noun/s) plus "is/are more" plus (adjective) plus "than" plus (noun/s). The nouns and the adjective are content words here, so they are all emphasized.
- **Every single day** Notice that each word here is stressed. The speaker wants to make a point, so she emphasizes each word equally. "Every single day" is a lot!
- **Good point** here means "I agree with you."
- **Take care of** This phrase is used with animals, people and things. It can mean "watch a child while her parents are away," "feed and house someone or something," or "make sure things work properly." *(I always take care of my baby brother./ I take care of my bird by feeding it and cleaning its cage./ I need to take care of the broken sink.)*
- **Yeah, you're right.** Notice the pronunciation of this expression — the words all blend together here. This casual expression is used to agree with someone that you know well.

Dialogue 3-8: **Giving Your Opinion**



JAKE: Where should we take a vacation this year? Let's **decide** soon.

MELISSA: Well, I'd like to go somewhere warm. **How about** the beach? Or we could rent a cabin on the lake.

JAKE: You want to go to the beach, again? I want to ski this winter. How about a compromise? What about traveling to the Alps in Europe next April? We can find a ski resort on a lake.

MELISSA: Oh, we've never been to Europe before! But I don't know if it will be sunny and warm then. I need to do some research first. That will help me **make up my mind.**

LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Decide** is a useful verb to express choice. The idiom **"to make up my mind"** also means "to decide": "There are so many choices in this menu. It's going to take awhile to make up my mind/decide." You can finish this sentence with either the idiom or the verb "decide."
- **How about** This phrase presents an alternative. This phrase can be followed by a subject plus a conjugated verb or by a noun: *How about we go swimming? / How about a movie tonight?*
- Many verbs express opinions: *to think / to believe / to suppose / to assume,* etc. They are not all synonymous. For example, "to suppose" and "to assume" express that the speaker has a preconceived idea: *He came back late from work, so I assumed that traffic was bad. /I suppose that may not have been the case, and that he might just have had a lot of work.*

Dialogue 3-9: **Hobbies**

RYAN: I'm so happy this week of **midterm** exams is finished.

TYLER: Same here. I've looking forward to relaxing in the mountains this weekend. I've planned a little hike in the woods. And I'm **gonna** take a canoe trip down the river if the weather cooperates.

RYAN: Oh, fun! I'm going to Michigan. I'm taking my camera because fall is coming fast. The leaves are already turning all shades of red and orange. It will be **awesome.**

TYLER: Next time you go there, I'll join you. I've heard Michigan is a great place to go canoeing.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Midterm** Students at universities in the United States often take exams midsemester, around October or March of every year. These exams are called midterms. Exams at the end of the semester are called finals or final exams and are usually in May.
- **Gonna** is a colloquial form of "I'm going to." Other similar constructions include "wanna" [want to] or "hafta" [have to]. These are examples of transcriptions of spoken English and should not be used in a formal context. Some of these examples are now seen in text messages as a means of shortening sentences.
- **Awesome:** is a colloquial way of saying "excellent," "cool," "great." *Last night's rock concert was awesome.*

Dialogue 3-10: **Weddings**

ANGELICA: **Doesn't** the bride look beautiful in that wedding dress?

MARIA: Yes. She looks amazing. And the groom is so romantic. **I just heard the story** of how they got engaged! He proposed to her during a candlelight dinner in London. Did you know that was where they went to school?

ANGELICA: Oh? Wonderful. And the **honeymoon!** What a great idea! **Most people just go to the beach** for a week after they **tie the knot.** But they plan on heading to California and cruising the coast on their motorcycle.

MARIA: Really! What a fantastic idea. This is by far the best wedding I've ever been to.



LANGUAGE NOTES

- **Doesn't ...?** When you have a negative question, the expected answer is "yes." As such, it expresses the exact opposite of what is being conveyed (i.e., the bride DOES look absolutely beautiful).
- Listen to the stress on **honeymoon.** There are three syllables in "honeymoon," with the stress on the first syllable [HO-ney-moon]. This content word is culturally important, so it's emphasized: It means a trip or vacation taken by a newly married couple.
- **Tie the knot** is an informal way of saying "get married."
- Can you find and explain the two usages of **just** in this dialogue? "Just" is an adverb that can be used in two different ways:

a) To indicate a very recent past **(I just heard the story)**. When used to convey time, "just" is commonly used with a simple past verb because the action is complete. Sometimes it can also be used with the present perfect (He's just finished writing a book).

b) To indicate contrast or emphasis **(Most people just go to the beach).** In that case, "just" can be replaced by "simply" and emphasize the word it relates to (a verb, adjective or other adverb) by denoting contrast. Compare the following sentences: "They just got married yesterday" (adverb of time). "The wedding reception was just wonderful" (adverb of emphasis).

Dialogue 3-11: **Giving Advice**



LAYLA: Thanks for meeting with me during your lunch hour. I appreciate it.

MONICA: No problem. I'm happy to help. What's going on?

LAYLA: Oh you know, the usual. Should I take this new job? Or do I stick with my current one?

MONICA: Well, I think it's time for a change, don't you? They pay you late and you are unhappy.

LAYLA: Do you really think so?

MONICA: **I know so.** And I've been listening to you complain for over a year now. **Trust me.** Take the job. What do you have to lose?

LANGUAGE NOTES

- In formal conversation, giving advice is often suggested through modals: *ought to/ should / could / If I were you.* In informal conversations people tend to use words such as I think that/ I feel that/ in my opinion.
- Listen for the emphasis on **I know so** and **Trust me.** These common phrases can be used to convey both positive and negative emotions. "I know so" conveys a deep belief or certainty. "To know" shows more certainty than "to think."
- Notice the use of command forms: *Take the job. /Trust me./ Go for it!* The command form can be used to gently persuade someone.

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